

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
One Corliss Park
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 2, 2004

Time: 6:00 PM

Minutes recorded by: Jake Camara

Minutes Approved on: January 13, 2005

Interpreters: Rosa Norberg

Minutes

I. Call to Order

The meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees was called to order by Trustee Florio at 6:06PM in the RI School for the Deaf Cafeteria.

II. Roll Call of Board of Trustees

In Attendance: Bonnie Abols, Carol Dorros, Steve Florio, Tracy Karasinski, Maureen McEntee, Phil Wheeler
Excused: Travis Zellner

III. Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

a. November 4, 2004

- i.** Trustee Florio: Page 4, bullet 2, "Island Isabella" should be changed to "Camp Isola Bella".
- ii. Motion** was made by Trustee Dorros to accept the minutes of November 4, 2004 as amended. Seconded by Trustee Abols. Approved unanimously.

IV. Reports

a. Interim Director

- i.** Interim Director John Plante highlighted points from his report.
- ii.** In addition to his report he added:
 - 1.** Last week the school was broken into and the Ford Taurus was stolen. It was discovered on the street somewhere in Providence on Monday morning by a staff member.
 - 2.** On November 29 High School Staff attended a workshop at RI Department of Education.
 - 3.** The school Basketball teams are leaving tomorrow for the annual tip off tournament in Vermont.
- iii.** Mr. Plante informed the Board that tonight he would need 15 minutes in Executive Session to discuss an issue.

1. Discussion took place regarding whether or not this could take place considering it was not on the agenda.
 2. It was decided that the Board would go into Executive Session later in the meeting because of the nature of the information.
- iv. Trustee Dorros asked Mr. Plante if it has been decided where the resources for speech and OT will come from for the Oral Education program.
1. Mr. Plante responded that part of the reason Tom Dipaolo spoke with local Special Education directors in Newport was to alert them to the fact that this program is in the works and there would be costs associated with it. He plans to use shared cost model that we use with our mainstream program. The School for the Deaf has only agreed to provide two teachers. For other services, the communities would be asked to assist.
 2. As far as professional development or training, this funding would come through a grant written to AGBell.
- v. Trustee Dorros asked what age group the Oral Program will be focused on.
1. It will serve preschool and Kindergarten age children.
- vi. Trustee Wheeler asked if there will be any opportunity to join processes or information sharing with other Schools for the Deaf who are working on strategic planning.
1. Mr. Plante responded that it wasn't an agenda item at the superintendent's conference he attended but it was foremost on everyone's mind. Discussion informally took place at most meals.
 2. Mr. Plante offered to contact people at other Schools for the Deaf to begin discussing possibilities regarding information sharing for strategic planning.
- b. Coordinators
- i. Trustee Dorros and Trustee Florio expressed concern about confidentiality regarding specific names being included in the coordinator's reports.
 1. Trustee Abols also agreed and asked that the names not be included in the coordinator's reports for confidentiality reasons.
 - ii. Trustee Wheeler thanked Cheryl and Mary Jane for writing the reports and asked if the other coordinators would also consider sending reports.
- c. Finance Director
- i. Wayne Hannon gave an update from his financial and audit reports.

1. The faculty and staff handbooks have been distributed to the staff and there is a sign off sheet which all staff must return by a certain date.
2. Deborah Topol asked whether or not this is a draft of the handbook
 - a. Mr. Hannon said this is not a draft but it is ongoing. It will be reviewed and revised as needed.
3. Mr. Hannon gave an update on the safety committee's evacuation plan. He informed the Board that it will be ready shortly and be submitted to the Policy Committee for approval.
4. Trustee Florio asked about the status of the cost centers.
 - a. Mr. Hannon responded that he didn't get a chance to put it into this format at this point. At the next meeting, a report will be provided on the projections and what the Board's budget out of those projections is.
5. Trustee Dorros asked what the \$210,000 for "Professional Services Program Development" is.
 - a. Mr. Hannon responded that these are mostly DataLogic employees. The school uses an outside firm to contract services where they don't have the ability to have an FTE.
6. Trustee Florio asked if the Gym was included in the regular budget.
 - a. Mr. Hannon responded that the Gym was renovated through capital money. There was \$484,000 in FY04 and \$110,000 in FY05. By the end of this calendar year they hope to have all expenses in from MARON Construction. There may be a few thousand dollars left when all is said and done and this money will be used in the building. Most likely it will be used for other capital needs.
7. An update was requested on the temporary occupancy permit for the locker rooms.
 - a. Mr. Hannon replied that when the bids went out for locker room renovation project they went out with some things cut out of the budget. One thing not in that bid was heat sensors between the ceiling tiles and roof because there was also another bid in process for the fire alarm system. The bid for the fire alarm system has dragged for 6-8 months. After the locker room project was complete, the Providence Fire Marshall said there needed to be heat sensors installed. The Providence Fire

Department decided to allow a temporary certificate of occupancy until the heat sensors are installed.

d. Chairperson

i. Correspondence

1. Trustee McEntee said that she has received correspondence from Peter McWalters saying that he will be appointing a chairperson shortly.
2. Trustee Florio informed the board that the resignation of Bill Walker has been received effective immediately. We now have a Deaf seat and a Hearing seat open.
3. Discussion took place regarding correspondence from the lawyer.
4. Trustee Wheeler said there are two issues:
 - a. How can the search committee be established given the by-laws?
 - b. Once that committee has been formed, can the chairperson of the board serve as chairperson of the sub-committee?
5. Trustee Wheeler said that the commissioner must approve the establishment of the National Search for a Director committee and how they will meet. The chairperson will also need to be approved by the commissioner. The lawyer did not see anything that said the BOT chairperson couldn't serve as the chairperson of the sub-committee.
6. Discussion took place regarding whether or not the sub-committee could meet on December 14th if it has not been approved by the commissioner.
7. It was decided that since there had already been a meeting with the Department of Education where they were told they could proceed, the meeting could take place.
8. Trustee Dorros suggested contacting the commissioner's office and see if someone wants to participate in the National Search for a Director Committee meetings.
9. **Motion** was made by Trustee McEntee that a letter be drafted to Peter McWalters indicating that there is a meeting on December 14 at which the Board will begin discussing the process for the search for a director. If they would like to have involvement in that or have a representative come, please do so. Otherwise the Board will inform them of the outcome of that meeting and keep them informed along the way. Seconded by Trustee Karasinski. Approved unanimously.
10. The Board of Trustees agreed to hear public comment.
11. Diane Bertozzi asked if they will allow a representative from each union to be on this search committee.

- a. Trustee Florio said that he wrote a letter and sent it to all the unions, parents, alumni association and Board of Regents employees. He has asked them to send letters to all members as part of the committee's work.
- 12. Deborah Topol said the letter is not clear whether this is a search committee or a committee to decide the procedure by which to choose a director. The letter was interpreted as being a letter inviting reps from each union to be on a search committee.
 - a. Trustee Florio said his impression is that the committee has been established and it will be working on the process.
 - b. Trustee Wheeler said some of the confusion was probably coming from the fact that this started with the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee decided there were too many personnel issues, so it was decided to form a second committee for a search.
 - c. Deborah Topol asked if this committee is going to be establishing a procedure to search for a director or searching for a director.
 - i. Trustee Florio responded that the Search Committee will discuss what the consultation group will do and develop the process to be approved by the commissioner.
 - d. Dinaz Adenwalla thanked the Board for starting this process. There is confusion as to whether this is an ad-hoc committee or a special committee. Letters have been sent to unions and there's a union meeting next week. They didn't see an approved ad-hoc committee. Is the ad-hoc committee under the personnel committee or replacing the personnel committee? Was it approved to have an ad-hoc committee to start the process?
 - i. Trustee Florio said the ad-hoc means a special committee. It is a special committee that will focus on a specific project. That committee has been recommended by the personnel committee. At the last meeting the Board approved the National Search for a Director Committee.
 - e. Mary Jane Johnson expressed concern that from the Teachers' union there was requested one representative and there is a membership of 42

people in the union. Could there be a higher representation on the committee?

- i. Trustee Florio said it is obviously not a perfect representation, but it was the best we could do.
 - ii. Trustee McEntee suggested going to the meeting on the 14th and discussing these issues since it is an open meeting.
- f. Diane Bertozzi said that she has heard nothing of this letter, nor have the other 14 people in Union. She heard from one person that they have received a private email asking them to be on the search committee.
 - i. Trustee McEntee again suggested going to the committee meeting and if there is no resolution at that meeting, bring it back to the full Board.
- g. Diane Bertozzi wondered why the consultant service is not just brought in to do this. Last time the consultant was hired to conduct the search and it was a costly venture.
 - i. Trustee Florio said that there will be a consulting firm. RIDE said we need to hire a consultant firm to coordinate the search. The rest of the process was left up to the Board.
- h. Trustee Dorros suggested writing another letter to everyone clarifying the meeting on the 14th, stating it is an open meeting and that anyone can attend. Clarifying what will be happening at the meeting.
- i. **Motion** was made by Trustee Dorros that the National Search Committee sends another letter to all of the groups previously contacted and all members of those groups, including parents, staff and alumni, indicating that this is an open meeting on December 14 and the purpose of the meeting with the agenda. Seconded by Trustee Wheeler.
 - i. **Discussion:**
 - ii. Trustee McEntee expressed concern that it would not be able to get out to all of these people in time.
 - iii. Trustee Wheeler suggested that part of the committee's discussion should be how to do outreach to the appropriate groups and make contact for future meetings. Like all other sub-committees, this committee should see what the response is by interested party's

who show up and show their commitment. It will be something that will be developed following the initial meeting.

- iv. If there is one particular union with no rep at the first meeting, it would be nice to be able to invite them to the next meeting.
- v. Diane Bertozzi said that it would have been nice if everyone had a letter in the staff mailbox and posted in a visible location.
- j. Trustee Dorros suggested all mailboxes of staff should get an individual letter and parents should be sent a letter through the mail.
- k. Trustee McEntee asked who is part of this committee right now.
 - i. Trustee Florio responded that right now it is just himself.
- l. **Motion** approved unanimously.
- m. It was decided that Trustee Florio will write the letter to be distributed to the groups mentioned in the motion.

e. Sub-Committees

i. Building

1. Trustee Dorros highlighted some points in her Building Committee report.

2. Strategic Planning

- a. Mr. Hannon explained several items regarding the recent discussion on strategic planning and the possibilities that someone from the State would be available to facilitate the process.
 - i. Department of Administration has been contacted and does not have anyone with that expertise. He received a call from RIDE with a name of a person from RI College with that expertise. He or she may not be able to do it either. If this is the case we then would then have to go out to bid.
 - ii. The bid process is very specific and tedious. The way the RFP is written determines how detailed it would be. The more detail we ask for, the more costly it will be but the more competitive it will be for the people who bid on it.
 - iii. It does not look like the bond from RIDE could be used for Strategic Planning.
 - iv. Trustee McEntee reminded Trustee Dorros that the RFP needs to come back to the

Board for approval.

V. New Business

a. Interview with Board of Trustees Nominees

- i.** Trustee Wheeler suggested that the candidate first speak a bit and gave a little background, and then questions follow that.
- ii.** Neil Leahey gave some background information on himself
 - 1.** Mr. Leahey lives in North Providence, RI. He has been working here in RI for 4 years and has been in dentistry for 10 years. He was raised in the Fall River, MA area and moved to RI because that is where his job was. A while ago he was invited to the school by one of the teachers to a forum. He was able to visit the classrooms. He saw that some of the students had goals, and some didn't have any idea what they would do with their lives. He had conversations with some of the students. He thought if he joined the Board he could become a great role model for the children here.
- iii.** Trustee McEntee: What skills and abilities would you be able to bring to the Board that would help further their goals and develop the mission of the school?
 - 1.** He responded that he has had some experience with summer counseling for a camp and believes he can share ideas from many meetings he's attended. I attended an oral school and learned ASL at the age of 20, so he has personal experience with both learning styles.
- iv.** Trustee Karasinski: What experience have you had serving on boards and committees? There is a pretty extensive time commitment. What is your availability to make this kind of commitment?
 - 1.** He responded that he did not have too much experience on boards and committees. He works every day, but he does have plenty of time outside of work and would be able to commit himself.
- v.** Trustee Abols: What piqued your interest to become a board member?
 - 1.** He was invited to a meeting and saw some needs and some guidance that was needed. He hoped his opinion could help the board be a role model to these students. There are very few deaf professionals in New England and it would be good for students to see good role models serving on the Board of Trustees.
- vi.** Trustee Dorros: I am wondering if you have a certain philosophy on the type of education you think is appropriate for students as far as communication as Hard of Hearing or Deaf students?

1. He responded that total communication is his philosophy. ASL being the main language of many deaf students, they will need extensive experience with English to be able to thrive in a work environment.
- vii. Trustee Dorros: What are your feelings about cochlear implants?
 1. He chose not to have one so it's difficult to say as he has never been in their shoes. There are many debates for and against implants, but it is up to the individual on an individual basis. If they are happy with their decision and it works for them, that's great.
- viii. Trustee Wheeler thanked Neil for offering to join Board of Trustees. It's great for the students to be able to have role models. Graduating from Tuft's and being a dental professional is encouraging.
- ix. Trustee McEntee stressed the fact that being on the Board of Trustees is more than just a commitment to the monthly meetings. There are committee meetings, responsibilities of those committees, general board meetings, etc. It can be very time consuming. The next couple years will be very intense years for the Board.
- x. Each Board member introduced themselves to Neil Leahey.
- b. **Motion** was made by Trustee McEntee to recommend Neil Leahey's name to the Board of Regents as a potential board member. Seconded by Trustee Abols. Approved unanimously.
- c. **Motion** was made by Trustee Florio that Neil be notified before the next Board meeting whether or not we've heard from the Board of Regents. **Motion** withdrawn.
- d. Trustee Wheeler suggested that if anyone finds out that Mr. Leahey has been appointed to the Board of Trustees to let him know.
- e. Trustee Dorros suggested postponing the elections to the next meeting.
- f. Trustee Florio suggested tabling the Executive Session until the next meeting so that it can be on the agenda.
 - i. Trustee McEntee clarified that it is not an emergency issue so it should be added to the next meeting agenda.
- g. Trustee Florio asked that John Plante contact James Leach to find out if he is still interested in being a board member.

VII. Adjournment

- i. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15PM.